WILLIAM BLAKE

The Gnostic Eve: William Blake and The Secret Doctrine, by H. P. Blavatsky

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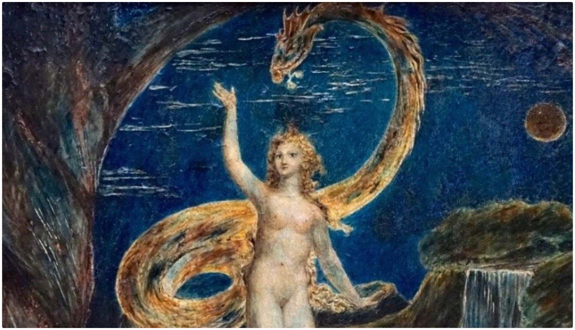
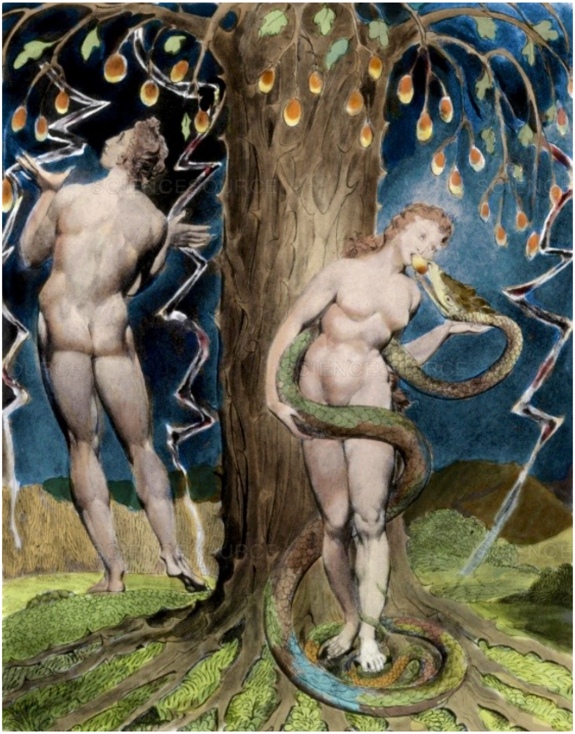
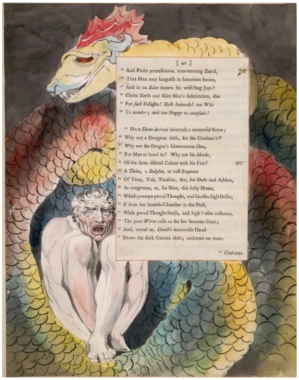
December 13, 2020 by Golgonooza

The Worship of the Serpent: The Awakening of Eve and the Generation of Nature





The Symbol of the Serpent: Introduction to Blavatsky's work



[40]

" And Fruits promiſcuous, ever-teeming *Earth*,
" That Man may languiſh in luxurious Scenes,
" And in an *Eden* mourn his with'ring Joys?
" Claim Earth and Skies Man's Admiration, due
" For *ſuch* Delights! Bleſt Animals! too Wiſe
" To *wonder*; and too Happy to *complain*!

" Our *Doom decreed* demands a mournful Scene;
" Why not a Dungeon dark, for the *Condemn'd*?
" Why not the Dragon's ſubterranean Den,
" For Man to howl in? Why not his Abode,
" Of the ſame diſmal Colour with his Fate?
" A *Thebes*, a *Babylon*, at vaſt Expence
" Of Time, Toil, Treaſure, Art, for Owls and Adders,
" As congruous, as, for Man, this lofty Dome,
" Which prompts proud Thought, and kindles high Deſire,
" If from her humble Chamber in the Duſt,
" While proud Thought ſwells, and high Deſire inflames,
" The poor *Worm* calls us for her Inmates there;
" And, round us, *Death's* inexorable Hand
" Draws the dark Curtain cloſe; undrawn no more.

" *Undrawn*

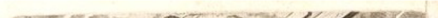
Blake's art speaks in symbols. But what exactly are symbols? And why are all of the deepest ancient esoteric truths always communicated through symbol and image? Pike suggests that symbols are the most powerful way to mediate and convey a "truth" that lies beyond ordinary conscious, "rational" thought programmes and parameters: "The first learning in the world consisted chiefly in symbols. The wisdom of the Chaldæans, Phœnicians, Egyptians, Jews; of Zoroaster, Sanchoniathon, Pherecydes, Syrus, Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, of all the ancients, that is come to our hand, is symbolic. It was the mode, says Serranus on Plato's Symposium, *of the Ancient Philosophers, to represent truth by certain symbols and hidden images."*

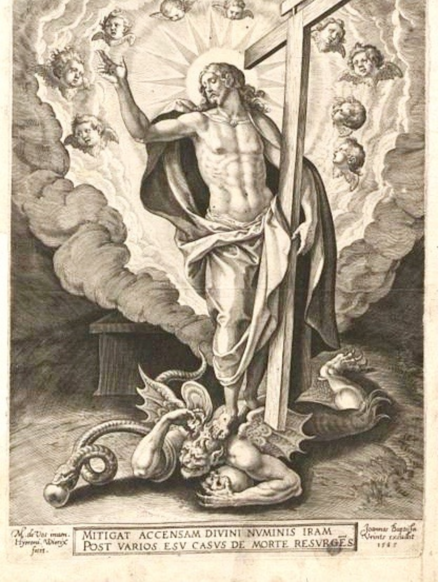
And one of the most powerful, and recurrent, of all these ancient symbols, he notes, is that of the serpent or dragon. "This will be found to be confirmed by an examination of some of the Symbols used in the Mysteries. One of the most famous of these was THE SERPENT. The Cosmogony of *the Hebrews and that of the Gnostics designated this reptile as the author of the fate of Souls. It was consecrated in the Mysteries of Bacchus and in those of Eleusis. Pluto overcame the virtue of Proserpine under the form of a serpent; and, like the Egyptian God Serapis, was always pictured seated on a serpent, or with that reptile entwined about him."*

"It is found on the Mithriac Monuments, and supplied with attributes of Typhon to the Egyptians. The sacred basilisc, in coil, with head and neck erect, was the royal ensign of the Pharaohs. Two of them were entwined around and hung suspended from the winged Globe on the Egyptian Monuments. On a tablet in one of the Tombs at Thebes, a God with a spear pierces a serpent's head. On a tablet from the Temple of Osiris at Philæ is a tree, with a man on one side, and a woman on the other, and in front of the woman an erect basilisc, with horns on its head and a disk between the horns. The head of Medusa was encircled by winged snakes, which, the head removed, left the Hierogram or Sacred Cypher of the Ophites or Serpent-worshippers. And the Serpent, in connection with the Globe or circle, is found upon the monuments of all the Ancient Nations." (Pike, Morals and Dogma of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry).

The Egyptian God Serapis. "Be ye wise as serpents": The ancient serpent-god of the Gnostics from the East was Serapis. The various spellings of the name Serapis are Sor-apis, Serapin, or in Hebrew *Seraph*. All these names mean 'serpent.' The name 'seraphim' is the plural form of serpent and is also said to mean "the burning ones." Serapis is the Hellenized version of the Egyptian Osiris-Apis. Plutarch informs us that it was the Greco-Egyptian Pharaoh, Ptolemy I who had introduced Serapis or serpent worship from Sinope in Asia Minor to the East, where he had taken the place of all the Gods as the supreme deity during reign of the Ptolemy Pharaohs. From this time thereafter, the multitude of gods from all around the world such as Osiris, Buddha, Cadmus, Quetzalcoatl, and Ku Kulcan, would all be depicted with the emblem of the serpent in an attempt to integrate this serpent deity into all these cultures as a one world religion.

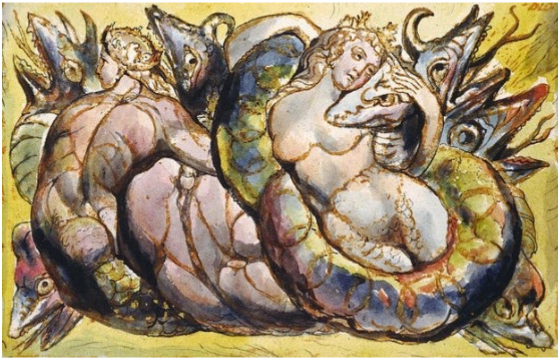
The symbol of the serpent weaves and writhes throughout all ancient human cultures and systems of thought, but what exactly does it signify? Clearly the snake and serpent, insofar as they link with physical, 'actual', animals, denote and convey very emotive responses in humans, often concerning issues of death, and protection, relating to their curious shedding of skin (resurrection), their poison (which can also be used for healing, as an antidote or form of 'vaccine'), their apparent sense of defensive 'cunning' or intelligence, their sexualised, wreathing undertones, and their striking mode of motion – a sort of hypnotic, spiral-like wave of coil around coil. They are deeply ambiguous symbols both in those cultures that 'worship' then, and those than 'demonise' them. And as such we find them rearing their fascinating, transfixing heads, in Blake's remarkable visions and imagery.




M. de Vos inuen.
Hyroni. Wierx fecit.
MITIGAT ACCENSAM DIVINI NVMINIS IRAM
POST VARIOS ESV CASVS DE MORTE RESVRGĒS
Joannes Baptista Vrints excudit

As Manly P. Hall wrote in *The Secret Teachings of All Ages*: “The Gnostic Mysteries were acquainted with the arcane meaning of Serapis, and through the medium of Gnosticism this god became inextricably associated with early Christianity.” We can see this influence in many images of ‘Christ’ such as this etching by Maarten de Vos, ‘*Christ resurrected on the day of judgement*’ (c. 1599), with the figure of Serapis (the Sun) similarly shown with the serpent or dragon under foot, as in the Egyptian and Asiatic originals. Eight ‘cherubim’ surround the risen Christ. Below, a skeleton (Death) is being swallowed up by the leviathan monster. Christ’s pierced foot treads on a serpent coiled around the secular world. Those in control of early institutional Christianity were from the first intent on converting and incorporating the radical Jewish prophet into the pre-existing Gnostic ‘Sun’ icon, changing him from a right hemisphere figure to a left hemisphere (solar) one, linked to the idea of ‘Light’.

Trying to understanding this powerfully enigmatic and ambiguous symbol through our normal, ‘naturalising’, ‘rationalising’ ways of seeing and thinking about the world is both pointless and deeply ironic: for the ‘snake’, in many senses (according to these ancient systems of thought), is what created and generates that program in the first place. It’s an inner serpentine form that generates its own self-enclosed and enclosing ratios, its spiralling double helix of birth and death, its dissociated dissatisfaction with the energy that both drives it and binds it.

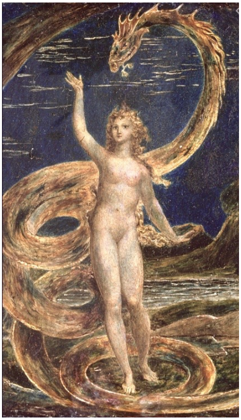


Embraced by and entwined in the Symbol. As R. A. Schwaller de Lubicz notes, symbols aim at “transcribing in a functional manner the esoteric significance of a teaching whose inner meaning remains inexpressible by any other form” (*Sacred Science*).

One of the most illuminating writers on what the serpent means in these ancient ways of thinking – systems of thought that Blake not only knew about and drew upon but also in many ways subverted – is the theosophist H. P. Blavatsky, more often perhaps known as ‘Madame Blavatsky’. She was deeply familiar with the secret and arcane systems of knowledge that lie behind many of our most ancient and familiar myths: the Garden of Eden, Eve, Horus, the Creation. In The Secret Doctrine she reveals some of these occluded dimensions.

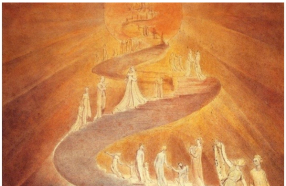
Edens, Serpents, and Dragons by H. P. Blavatsky

Nature: The Nature of the Serpent

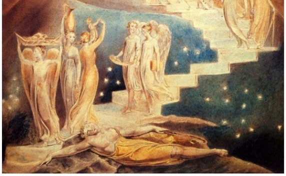


Raised, or fallen?

What was the nature of the serpent? Mystics intuitionally see in the serpent of *Genesis* an animal emblem and a high spiritual essence: a cosmic force superintelligent, a “great fallen light,” a spirit sidereal, aerial and tellurian at the same time, “whose influence circumambulates the globe (*qui circumambulat terram*, i.e., wrapped around the earth – as in the famous figure of the *ouroboros)* as a Christian fanatic of the dead-letter (de Mirville) has it, and which only manifested itself under the physical emblem, which was the most convenient “with respect to its moral and intellectual coils”: i.e., under the ophidian form.

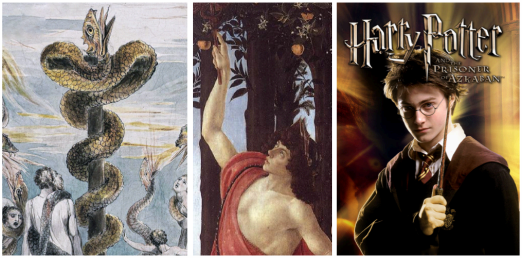


But what will Christians make of the Brazen Serpent, the “divine healer,” if the serpent is to be regarded as the emblem of cunning and evil? The “Evil One” itself? How can the line of demarcation ever be settled, when it is traced arbitrarily in a sectarian theological spirit. For, if the followers of the Roman Church are taught that Mercury and Æsculapius, or Asclepios, who are, in truth, one, are "devils and sons of devils," and the wand and serpent of the latter were "the devil's wand"; how about the "brazen serpent" of Moses? Every scholar knows that both the *heathen* wand and the Jewish "serpent" are one and the same, namely, the *Caduceus of Mercury*, son of Apollo-python. It is easy to comprehend why the Jews adopted the ophidian shape for their "seducer." With them it was purely *physiological and phallic*; and no amount of casuistical reasoning on the part of the Roman Catholic Church can give it another meaning, once that the mystery language is well studied, and that the Hebrew scrolls are read numerically.



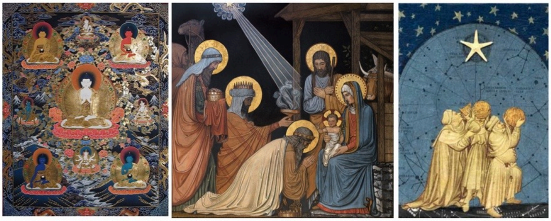
Jacob's Ladder: note the serpentine 'coils' that form the spiral going both downwards and upwards, in the continually process of constant self-actualisation and self-transcendence that Hegel called '*aufhebung*': the moment of Eve eating the apple, over and over

The Occultists know that the serpent, the *Naga*, and the dragon have each a septenary (or 'seven-fold') meaning; that the Sun, for instance, was the *astronomical* and cosmic emblem of the two contrasted lights, and the two serpents of the Gnostics, the good and the evil one; they also know that, when *generalised*, the conclusions of both science and theology present two most ridiculous extremes. For, when the former tells us that it is sufficient to trace the legends of the serpents to their primal source, the astrological legend, and to meditate seriously on the *Sun*, conqueror of Python, and the celestial virgin in the Zodiac forcing back the devouring dragon, if we would have the key of all the subsequent religious dogmas; it is easy to perceive that, instead of generalising, the author simply has his eye on Christian religion and *Revelation*.



"Every scholar knows that both the heathen wand and the Jewish 'serpent' are one and the same, namely, the Caduceus of Mercury, son of Apollo-python."

In every ancient language the word *dragon* signified what it now does in Chinese — i.e., "the being who excels in intelligence" and in Greek *drakon*, "he who sees and watches." And is it to the animal of that name that any of these epithets can apply? Is it not evident, wherever superstition and oblivion of the primitive meaning may have led savages now, that the said qualifications were intended to apply to the human originals, who were symbolized by serpents and dragons? These "originals" — called to this day in China "the Dragons of Wisdom" — were the first disciples of the Dhyanis, who were their instructors; in short, the primitive adepts of the Third Race, and later, of the Fourth and Fifth Races. The name became universal, and no sane man before the Christian era would ever have confounded the man and the symbol.



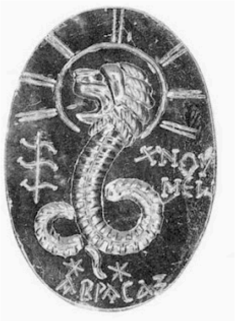
Who the “Magi” really were: “These ‘originals’ — called to this day in China ‘the Dragons of Wisdom’ — were the first disciples of the Dhyanis, who were their instructors”. The Magi or ‘three Wise men’ had nothing to do with the story of Jesus, but were grafted onto the narrative in order to link it to the older Serpent narrative. The Persian magi were skilled astronomers, who studied the stars and who were part of the esoteric priestly caste, or “Watchers”: “the beings who excel in intelligence” and in Greek *drakon*, or “he who sees and watches.”

The symbol of Chnoubis, or the soul of the world, writes Champollion, “is among others that of an enormous serpent standing on human legs; this reptile, the emblem of the good genius, is a veritable *Agathodaemon.* It is often represented bearded … That sacred animal, identical with the serpent of the Ophites, is found engraved on numerous Gnostic or Basilidean stones. The serpent has various heads, but is constantly inscribed with the letters *CHNOUBIS*.”

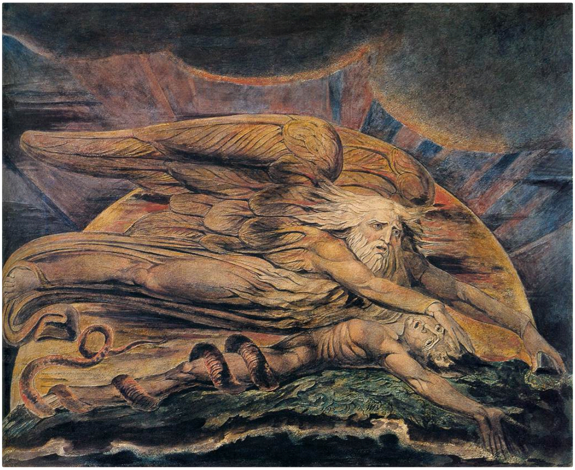
The solar Chnoubis, or Agathodaemon, is the Christos of the Gnostics, as every scholar knows. He is intimately connected with the seven sons of Sophia (Wisdom), the seven sons of Aditi (universal Wisdom), her eighth being Marttanda, the Sun, which seven are the seven planetary regents or genii. Therefore Chnoubis was the spiritual Sun of Enlightenment, of Wisdom, hence the patron of all the Egyptian Initiates, as Bel-Merodach (or Bel-Belitanus) became later with the Chaldeans.

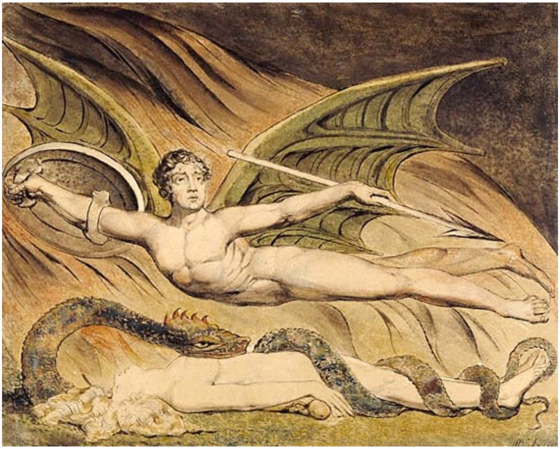
Agathodaemon was endowed “with the knowledge of good and evil,” i.e., with divine Wisdom, as without the former the latter is impossible. Repeating Iamblichus, Champollion shows him to be “the deity called *Eichton* (or the fire of the celestial gods — the great Thoth-Hermes), to whom Hermes Trismegistus attributes “the invention of magic.” The “*invention”* of magic! A strange term to use, as though the unveiling of the eternal and actual mysteries of nature could be *invented.*

Hermes was not the inventor, or even the discoverer, for, as said in the footnote, Thoth-Hermes is a generic name, as is Enoch (*Enoichion*, the “inner, spiritual eye”), *Nebo*, the prophet and seer, etc. It is not the proper name of any one living man, but a generic title of many adepts. Their connection in symbolic allegories with the serpent is due to their enlightenment by the solar and planetary gods during the earliest intellectual Race, the Third. They are all the representative patrons of the Secret Wisdom. Asclepios is the son of the Sun-god Apollo — and he is Mercury; Nebo is the son of Bel-Merodach; Vaivasvata Manu, the great Rishi, is the son of Vivisvat — the Sun or Surya, etc. Let the reader be reminded, in this connection, of the fact that Apollonius met in Kashmir Buddhist *Nagas* — which are neither serpents zoologically, nor yet the *Nagas* ethnologically, but “wise men.”



Chnoubis is an Egyptian Gnostic solar icon, found most often on gnostic gems and amulets for protection against poison and disease. It is a composite figure with the head of a lion and the body of a serpent, usually with seven rays emanating from the head, sometimes, with the twelve zodiacal signs. Chnoubis is an aspect of the Gnostic Demiurge, Yaldabaoth, and is associated with Abraxas. Images of Chnoubis are most often found inscribed on gnostic gems and small talismans made from semi-precious stones that date from the first century onward. The lion’s head represents the solar forces, enlightenment; the serpent, the lower impulses, earth. The rays represent the seven planets, the seven Greek vowels, and the seven colours of the visible spectrum.

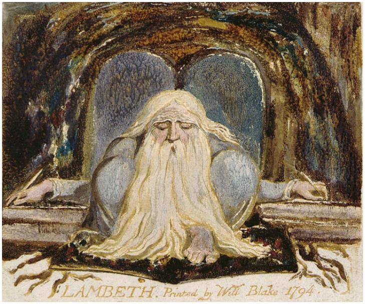




The Creation of Adam/ The Creation of Eve? Satan Exulting over Eve/Elohim Exulting over Adam? Left to Right/ Right to Left? “What was the nature of the serpent? Mystics intuitionally see in the serpent of *Genesis* an animal emblem and a high spiritual essence: a cosmic force superintelligent, a ‘great fallen light,’ a spirit sidereal, aerial and tellurian at the same time, ‘whose influence circumambulates the globe’.” The esoteric doctrine suggests that good and evil are profoundly intermixed and interdependent, rooted in the same source or entity. It depends on how you look at it: the idea of “contraries” – embodied in the double helix of the Brazen Serpent or Caduceus of Mercury/Moses which both devours and preserves, kills and heals, poisons and remedies. In cultures which forced a Cartesian separation of this one energy into two opposing beings (and believing in the triumph of one of them over the other), such ideas were blasphemous – hence in part the use of coded symbolism.

The Cosmic Struggle between the Left and the Right

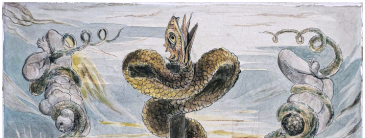
The Bible, from *Genesis* to *Revelations*, is but a series of historical records of the great struggle between white and black Magic, between the Adepts of the right path, the Prophets, and those of the left, the Levites, the clergy of the brutal masses.


LAMBETH. Printed by Will Blake 1794.

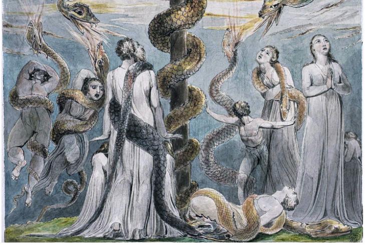
"*Which is the Way/The Right or the Left*". Blake inscribed this gnomic question on one version of this striking design from the title page of *The Book of Urizen*, in itself suggesting the bifurcating world in which Urizenic thinking bases itself. All rational questions seem to invite the construction of reality into yes/no, left/right ways. This dualism – recalling that of the 'Tree of Good and Evil' – whose fruit bifurcates Adam and Eve's mind – is reinforced in the symbolism of the image: the two stone tablets with arched tops like tombstones behind him, representing the fallen Mosaic Law; the roots splitting beneath him; and most strikingly of all he holds in his left hand a quill for writing (words), and in his left hand a brush or engraver for illustrating (images). Which hemisphere: left or right?

Even the students of Occultism, though some of them have more archaic manuscripts and direct teaching to rely upon, find it difficult to draw a line of demarcation between the *Sodales* of the Right Path and those of the Left. The great schism that arose between the sons of the Fourth Race, as soon as the first Temples and Halls of Initiation had been erected under the guidance of "the Sons of God," is allegorized in the Sons of Jacob. That there were two schools of Magic, and that the orthodox Levites did not belong to the *holy* one, is shown in the words pronounced by the dying Jacob. And here it may be well to quote a few sentences from *Isis Unveiled*:

> The dying Jacob thus describes his sons: "Dan," he says, "shall be a *serpent* by the way, an *adder* in the path, that biteth the horse-heels, so that his rider shall fall backwards (i.e., he will teach candidates *black* magic) … I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord!" Of Simeon and Levi the patriarch remarks that they "*are* brethren; instruments of *cruelty* are in their habitations. O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly." Now in the original, the words "their secret" really are "their Sod." And Sod was the name for the great mysteries of Baal, Adonis and Bacchus, who were all sun-gods and had serpents for symbols.



The Kabbalists explain the allegory of the fiery serpents by saying that this was the name given to the tribe of Levi, to all the *Levites*, in short, and that Moses was the chief of the *Sodales.* It is to the mysteries that the original meaning of the "Dragon-Slayers" has to be traced, and the

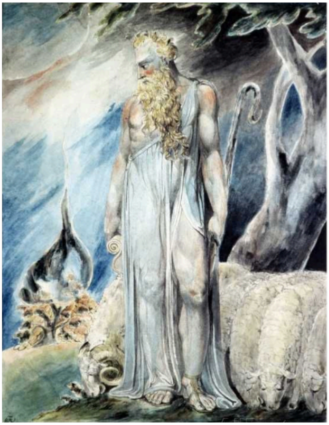


Moses, “the chief of the Mysteries, and the Hierophant thereof” (Image: *Moses and the Brazen Serpent* by William Blake, showing Moses’s role as esoteric hierophant)

question is fully treated of hereafter.

Meanwhile it follows that, if Moses was the chief of the Mysteries, he was the Hierophant thereof, and further, if, at the same time, we find the prophets thundering against the “abominations” of the people of Israel, that there were two schools. “Fiery serpents” was, then, simply the epithet given to the Levites of the priestly caste, after they had departed from the *good law*, the traditional teachings of Moses: and to all those who followed *Black Magic.* Isaiah, when referring to the “rebellious children” who will have to carry their riches into the land whence come “the viper and *fiery* flying *serpent*“, or Chaldea and Egypt, whose Initiates had already greatly degenerated in his day, meant the sorcerers of those lands. But these must be carefully distinguished from the “Fiery Dragons of Wisdom” and the “Sons of the Fire Mist”.

In the “*Book of the Dead*” it is commanded that one of its chapters should be read “in the presence of a serpent on two legs,” which means a high Initiate, a Hierophant, for the discus and ram’s horns that adorn his “serpent’s” head in the hieroglyphics of the title of the said chapter denote this. Over the “serpent” are represented the two mystic eyes of Ammon, the hidden “mystery god.” This passage corroborates our assertion, and shows what the word “serpent” meant in antiquity. The same ram’s horns are found on the heads of Moses which were on some old medals seen by the writer in Palestine, one of which is in her possession. The horns, made to form part of the shining aureole on the statue of Moses in Rome (Michael Angelo), are vertical instead of being bent down to the ears, but the emblem is the same; hence the Brazen Serpent.



Moses and the Burning Bush (c. 1800-3). After receiving the ten commandments from God atop Mount Sinai, Moses returned to the Israelites with ‘qāran’ or, when rendered into English, ‘horns’ (‘And behold his face had horns’ — Exodus 34:29).

And now it may be hoped the full meaning of the serpent emblem is proven. It is neither that of evil, nor, least of all, that of the devil; but is, indeed, “the eternal Sun-Abraxas”, the central spiritual sun of all the Kabbalists, represented in some diagrams by the circle of Tiphereth.

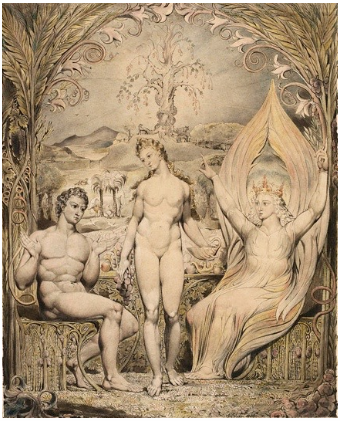
And here, again, we may quote from our earlier volumes and enter into further explanations:

> From this region of unfathomable depth (Bythos, Aditi, Shekinah, the veil of the unknown) issues forth a circle formed of spirals. This is Tiphereth; which, in the language of symbolism, means a grand cycle, composed of smaller ones. Coiled within, so as to follow the spirals, lies the serpent — emblem of Wisdom and Eternity — the dual Androgyne; the cycle representing *Ennoia*, or

> the divine mind (a power which does not create but which must assimilate), and the serpent, the Agathodaemon, the Ophis, *the Shadow of the Light* (non-eternal, yet the greatest divine light on our plane). Both were the *Logoi* of the Ophites: or the Unity as *Logos* manifesting itself as a double principle of Good and Evil.

Were it light alone, inactive and absolute, the human mind could not appreciate nor even realise it. Shadow is that which enables light to manifest itself, and gives it objective reality. Therefore, shadow is not evil, but is the necessary and indispensable corollary which completes Light or Good: *it is its creator on Earth.* According to the views of the Gnostics, these two principles are immutable: Light and Shadow, Good and Evil being virtually one and having existed through all eternity, as they will ever continue to exist so long as there are manifested worlds.

The Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil



‘Raphael Warns Adam and Eve’ from Blake’s Illustrations to Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (the Butts Set, c. 1808)

This symbol accounts for the adoration by this sect of the Serpent, as the Saviour, coiled either around the sacramental loaf, or a Tau, the phallic emblem. As a Unity, Ennoia and Ophis are the *Logos.* When separated, one is the Tree of Life (spiritual), the other, the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Therefore, we find Ophis urging the first human couple — the material production of Ilda-Baoth, but which owed its spiritual principle to Sophia-Achamoth — to eat of the forbidden fruit, although Ophis represents divine Wisdom.

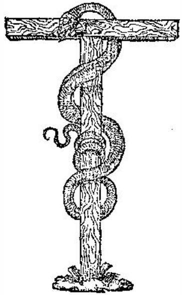
The serpent, the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, and the Tree of Life, are all symbols transplanted from the soil of India. The Arasa-Maram, the banyan tree, so sacred with the Hindus (since Vishnu during one of his incarnations, reposed under its mighty shade and there taught human philosophy and sciences), is called the Tree of Knowledge and the Tree of Life. Under the protecting foliage of this king of the forests, the Gurus teach their pupils their first lessons on immortality and initiate them into the mysteries of life and death. The *Java*-Aleim of the Sacerdotal College are said, in the Chaldean tradition, to have taught the sons of men to become like one of them. To the present day Foh-tchou, who lives in his Foh-Maeyu, or temple of Buddha, on the top of the “Kouin-long-sang,” the great mountain, produces his greatest religious miracles under a tree called in Chinese Sung-Ming-Shu, or the Tree of Knowledge and the Tree of Life, for ignorance is death, and knowledge alone gives immortality. This marvellous display takes place every three years, when an immense concourse of Chinese Buddhists assembles in pilgrimage at the holy place.

Now it may become comprehensible why the earliest Initiates and Adepts, or the "Wise Men," for whom it is claimed that they were initiated into the mysteries of nature by the universal mind, represented by the highest angels, were named the "Serpents of Wisdom" and "Dragons"; as also how the first physiologically complete couples — after being initiated into the mystery of human creation through Ophis, the *manifested Logos* and the androgyne, by eating of the fruit of knowledge — gradually began to be accused by the material spirit of posterity of having *committed Sin*, of having disobeyed the "Lord God," and of having been tempted by the Serpent.

So little have the first Christians (who despoiled the Jews of their Bible) understood the first four chapters of Genesis in their esoteric meaning, that they never perceived that not only was no sin intended in this disobedience, but that actually the "Serpent" was "the Lord God" himself, who, as the Ophis, the Logos, or the bearer of divine creative wisdom, taught mankind to become creators in their turn. They never realised that the *Cross* was an evolution from the "tree and the serpent," and thus *became the salvation of mankind.*

By this it would become the very first fundamental symbol of Creative cause, applying to geometry, to numbers, to astronomy, to measure and to animal reproduction. According to the Kabbala the *curse on man came with the formation of woman.* The circle was separated from its diameter line. "From the possession of the double principle in one, that is the Androgyne condition, the separation of the dual principle was made, presenting two opposites, whose destiny it was, for ever after, to seek reunion into the original *one* condition. The curse was this, viz.: that nature, impelling the search, evaded the desired result by the production of a new being, distinct from that reunion or oneness desired, by which the natural longing to recover a lost state was and is for ever being cheated. It is by this tantalizing process of a continued curse that Nature lives."

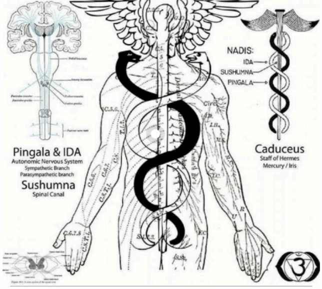
The allegory of Adam being driven away from the "Tree of Life" means, esoterically, that the newly separated Race abused and dragged the mystery of Life down into the region of animalism and bestiality. For, as the *Zohar* shows, that Matronethah (Shekinah, the wife of Metatron symbolically) "is the way to the great Tree of Life, the Mighty Tree," and Shekinah is divine grace. This 'Tree' reaches the heavenly vale and is hidden between three mountains (the upper triad of principles, in man). From these three mountains, the Tree ascends above (the adept's knowledge aspires heavenward) and then re-descends below (into the adept's *Ego* on Earth).



Tau Cross (Ophite). Ophite (from the Greek *ophis*, "serpent") denotes a member of the Gnostic sects that flourished in the Roman Empire during the 2nd century AD and for several centuries thereafter. A variety of Gnostic sects, such as the Naassenes and Cainites, are included under the designation Ophites. These sects' beliefs differed in various ways, but central to them all was a dualistic theology that opposed a purely spiritual Supreme Being, who was both the origin of the cosmic process and the highest good, to a chaotic and evil material world. To the Ophites, man's dilemma results from his being a mixture of these conflicting spiritual and material elements. Only *gnosis*, the esoteric knowledge of good and evil, can redeem man from the bonds of matter and make him aware of the unknown God who is the true source of all being. The Ophites regarded the Jehovah of the Old Testament as merely a demiurge, or subordinate deity who had created the material world. They attached special importance to the serpent in the biblical book of Genesis because he had enabled men to obtain the all-important knowledge of good and evil that Jehovah had withheld from them.

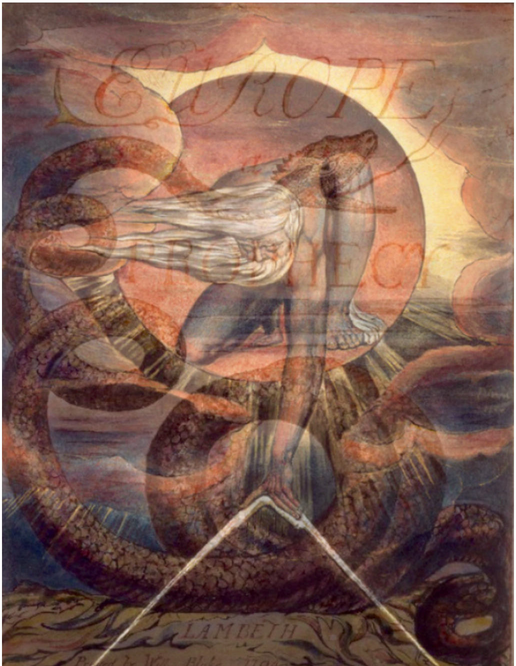
Wings of the Cherubim

This Tree is revealed in the day time and is hidden during the night, *i.e.,* revealed to an enlightened mind and hidden to Ignorance, which is night (see *Zohar*). "The Tree of the Knowledge of the Good and the Evil grows from the roots of the Tree of Life." But then also: "In the Kabbala it is plainly to be found that "the *Tree of Life* was the ansated cross in its sexual aspect, and that the *Tree of Knowledge* was the separation and the coming together again to fulfil the fatal condition. To display this in numbers the values of the letters composing the word Otz (עץ), tree, are 7 and 9, the seven being the holy feminine number and the nine the number of the phallic or male energy. This ansated cross is the symbol of the Egyptian *female-male*, Isis-Osiris, the germinal principle in all forms, based on the primal manifestation applicable in all directions and in all senses."



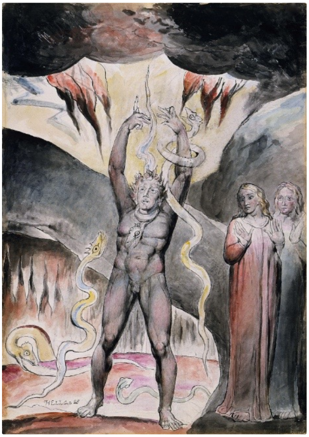
The Caduceus of Hermes

Let the reader be reminded that in the *Zohar*, and also in all the Kabbalistic works, it is maintained that "Metatron united to *Shekinah*" (or Shekinah as the veil (grace) of Ain-Soph), representing the Logos, is that very *Tree of Knowledge*; while Shamael — the dark aspect of the Logos — occupies only the rind of that tree, and has the knowledge of evil alone. As Lacour, who saw in the scene of the Fall an incident pertaining to Egyptian Initiation, says: "The Tree of the *Divination*, or of the *Knowledge* of Good and Evil … is the science of *Tzyphon*, the genius of doubt (*Tzy*to, teach, and *phon*, doubt). Tzyphon is one of the Aleim; we shall see him presently under the name of *Nach*, the tempter" (*Les OEloim*). He is now known to the symbologists under the name Jehovah.



"It indeed appear'd to Reason as if Desire was cast out; but the Devil's account is, that the Messiah fell, and formed a Heaven of what he stole from the Abyss" (Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*)

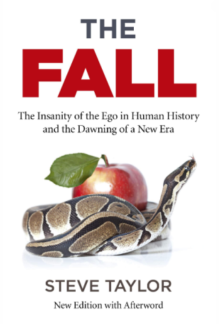
Coda: Blake in the Garden



Blavatsky's take on the serpent is of course the usual 'Gnostic' or esoteric one, in which the 'Fall' is actually the moment that humanity finally became illuminated, and breaks free of the repressive Demiurge. In these esoteric traditions, the 'serpent' represents a specific form of 'wisdom' that is often associated with that of the rule of the priests and the elites (the "initiated").

The word 'wisdom' – which, as we've seen, is so central to ideas and etymologies of the 'serpent', 'dragon', and 'ophite' – is itself part of this 'underground' or hidden system of meaning and reference, a code word for the new abstracted and dissociated form of 'knowing', which had just taken hold of human cultures, with the dramatic expansion of new forms of abstract and hyper-rational thinking in Sumer, Babylon, and Egypt at this time. It is a form of knowing, or *gnosis*, that has striking similarities and correlations with what we now term 'left hemisphere' ways of thinking and being in the world.

In his compelling book *The Fall*, Steve Taylor for example notes that "after 4000 BCE the Middle East saw a sudden surge of technological development which quickly outstripped anything which had come before." These innovations included the wheel, the plough, "complex new writing and number systems, and the calendar" (Taylor). As Baring and Cashford also remark, "a tremendous explosion of knowledge took place as writing, mathematics and astronomy were discovered. It was as if the human mind had suddenly revealed a new dimension of itself" (Baring & Cashford). These are all strikingly 'left brain' skills and processes, that were now increasingly dominating both the human brain and human culture.


THE
FALL
The Insanity of the Ego in Human History and the Dawning of a New Era
STEVE TAYLOR
New Edition with Afterword

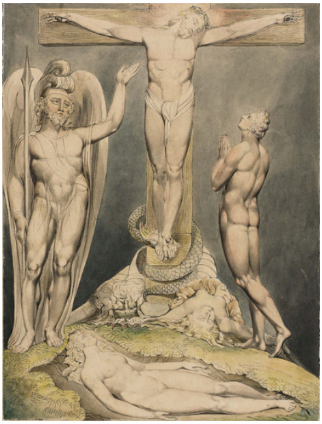
Taylor observes that a significant shift occurred in human cultures around six thousand years ago, resulting in the relatively sudden and dramatic advances in technological and linguistic innovations which were such a prominent characteristic of the extraordinary new civilisations of Sumer and Babylon, as well as in equally sudden and dramatic advances in social inequality, war, hierarchy, and accountancy. Taylor adds that "the first signs of social upheaval occur in the Nile region at around

And as McGilchrist notes in his discussion of the cultural importance of the introduction of rationalistic and "Apollonian" elements into ancient cultures around this time, "surely these, it seems to me, represent the most positive aspects of the left hemisphere, in its guise as Lucifer, the bringer of light?" (*The Master and his Emissary*). The story of Eve, and of Gnostic illumination is all about "light". And indeed all about the dissociation of the "spiritual" or rational part of us ("Logos") from the body, which was increasingly seen as corrupt, material, non-spiritual, gross, sinful, deceiving, fallen – the domain, and creation, so we are told in the Gnostic version of things, of the materialistic "Demiurge".

But, counters Blake, the body isn't like this. The body is the very entrance to God, the image of God:

3300 BCE when a people who called themselves 'followers of Horus' established themselves as a ruling class".

> 1. Man has no Body distinct from his Soul; for that call'd Body is a portion of Soul discern'd by the five Senses, the chief inlets of Soul in this age.
> 2. Energy is the only life, and is from the Body; and Reason is the bound or outward circumference of Energy.
> 3. Energy is Eternal Delight.

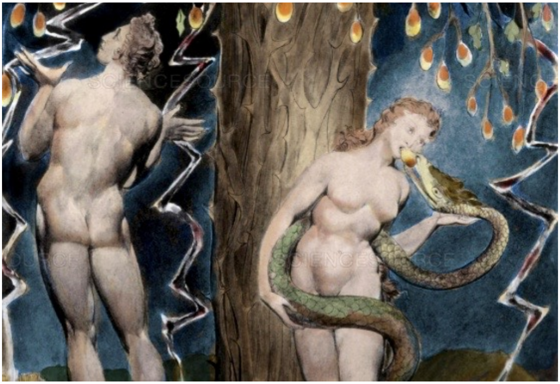


Crucified Serpent (Alchemical Cross). The gruesome image of a crucified serpent is an old alchemical symbol representing the "fixing of the volatile," or, making the elixir of mercury, a legendary curative, by removing the 'volatile' or poisonous element. As we've seen, this picture is in part derived from the biblical story of Moses, who erected a brazen snake as a charm against plague. The left hemisphere 'fixes' the dynamic, flowing energy of the right hemispheric world on its Urizenic Cross.

In the margins of his copy of Berkeley's *Siris* Blake wrote: "Imagination or the Human Eternal Body in Every Man… Imagination is the Divine Body in Every Man." For Blake, the "Eternal Body of Man is the Imagination, that is, God himself … The Divine *Body* … Jesus: we are his Members". To see the body as mere materialism is to see it with the eyes of Urizen – with the dissociated, left-hemisphere abstracted mode of thinking that sees itself as the only pure and spiritual, and which therefore also sees the body in which it now finds itself apparently encased and imprisoned (and a body, moreover, that is apparently constantly 'tempting' its pure, rationalising 'spiritualised' programs) as the work of the devil, or at least the 'Demiurge'. This way of thinking about the body doesn't recognise or realise – just as Blavatsky doesn't recognise or realise – that it itself is the Demiurge that is talking, the Urizenic hyper-rationalising Creator of this perception:

> The ancient tradition that the world will be consumed in fire at the end of six thousand years is true, as I have heard from Hell.
>
> For the cherub with his flaming sword is hereby commanded to leave his guard at tree of life; and when he does, the whole creation will be consumed and appear infinite and holy, whereas it now appears finite and corrupt.
>
> This will come to pass by an improvement of sensual enjoyment. But first the notion that man has a body distinct from his soul is to be expunged.

For Blake, the expulsion from "Eden", an integrated state of psychic wholeness, was indeed a "Fall into Division", and the "serpent" represents the emergence of the domineering program of left-hemispheric or Urizenic 'knowledge' that precipitates this fall within the human body, and the start of the dissociation process – a rationalising, naturalising, and incredibly judgmental (Good & Evil) program or Power, that divides everything into separate parts, with itself on top. "Adam", with his back to us, represents the deep unconsciousness of this process, the splitting of the human mind into dissociated aspects or parts, another feature or consequence of the "Fall":



Back to the Fall

This is an edited version of the section 'Edens, Serpents, and Dragons' in *The Secret Doctrine* by H. P. Blavatsky. To read the full article, click here. To receive more posts direct from Church of Blake, simply Follow the blog here (bottom right hand corner): https://thehumandivine.org

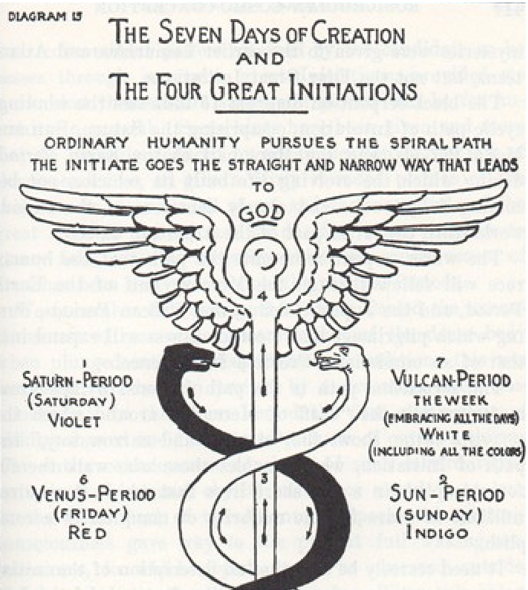
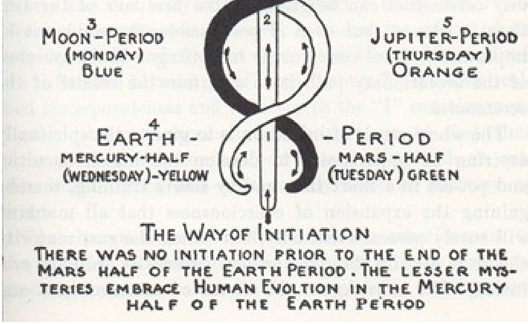
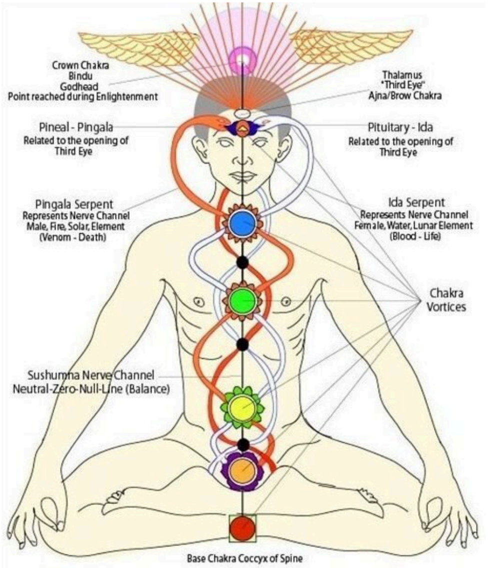


DIAGRAM 15
THE SEVEN DAYS OF CREATION
AND
THE FOUR GREAT INITIATIONS
ORDINARY HUMANITY PURSUES THE SPIRAL PATH
THE INITIATE GOES THE STRAIGHT AND NARROW WAY THAT LEADS
TO
GOD
4
1
SATURN-PERIOD
(SATURDAY)
VIOLET
7
VULCAN-PERIOD
THE WEEK
(EMBRACING ALL THE DAYS)
WHITE
(INCLUDING ALL THE COLORS)
6
VENUS-PERIOD
(FRIDAY)
RED
3
2
SUN-PERIOD
(SUNDAY)
INDIGO

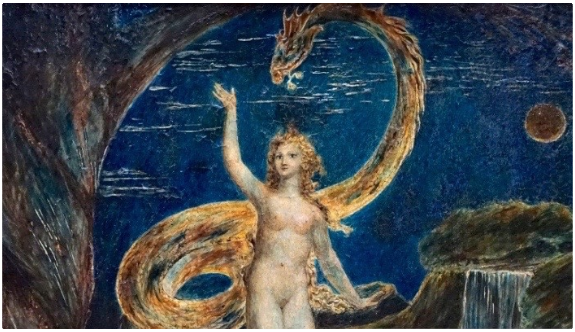


THE WAY OF INITIATION

THERE WAS NO INITIATION PRIOR TO THE END OF THE MARS HALF OF THE EARTH PERIOD. THE LESSER MYSTERIES EMBRACE HUMAN EVOLTION IN THE MERCURY HALF OF THE EARTH PERIOD



"Remember god is spirit. What god says comes from within you, from you clearing out the temple where the christ can reside. The temple is your head region with the brain. The christ is the 'esse', the ancient essenes knew that the christ was a fluid in the claustrum that has to be lifted up the spinal column the pole Moses had. This fluid is also known as the oil of chrism/christos, and also called the serpent energy or kundalini. The Bible was called the HELIOS BIBLIOS, meaning the SUN papers. The ancient gnostics were the real christ-ians and that's why they lived out on their own away from organized religion. The whole bible is astro-theology mixed with alchemy and all characters, places, animals, battles won and lost, wells, ladders in dreams, kings, priests, disciples, nazarites, samarians, pharisees, saducees, john the baptist, resurrections, transfigurations, arks of the covenant, noah's ark, the last supper – ALL happens within you!! The christ must be FORMED in you, FORMED is key word. The Tau is the realm of matter. It is our universe where the laws of physics rule. The serpent is Sophia in her basest form. She rules the wisdom of Time and Space. If a Magus ignores the laws that govern our existence and only functions in the realm of possibilities and abstract thought she will strike the Magus and remind him that you cannot ignore reality of life which he functions. You must also live life and deal with the function of life that every human is subject to. (Symbol Dictionary).



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January 2022
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October 2016
September 2016
August 2016
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May 2016
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